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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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Subject: "HOUSE PLANS AND HOUSEKEEPERS." Information from Miss Maude Wilson, Oregon State College, approved by the Extension Office, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Predictions for 1936 are that home building and repairing will be on the increase. Times are picking up. People have more money to spend on their homes than they have had for the last few years. And the Government is encouraging home building with its housing loans, resettlement program, and so on. So, families that have been doubling up and living in cramped quarters will be looking for more adequate living places. And young couples who have been lodging with their parents will be moving into homes of their own. Then, many people who have not been able to afford to repair or remodel lately will be doing it during the coming year.

This is news to make every housewife sit up and take more than notice. Though house planning and building in the past have usually been left to the man of the family and the builder, they are really the housewife's concern, for her house is not only her home but also her workshop and office. It determines in a large measure how hard or easy her job will be.

Miss Maude Wilson of Oregon State College, who has been making a study of the needs of rural homes, says that house-planners usually provide well for some needs and forget others. And she says: "The blueprints of a new house constitute an order calling on the time and energy of several generations of housekeepers. Many blueprints are sentences to hard and unnecessary labor. Many include inconvenient features just because they are traditional in that part of the country, or are stylish and will impress the neighbors." Miss Wilson thinks every house-planner needs a check-list of family activities so the new home will provide for all the needs of the whole family.

What do farm homemakers consider necessities for a comfortable, convenient home? That's what Miss Wilson wanted to find out. So she sent out a questionnaire asking for the opinions of farm housewives in all parts of the country. The replies showed that women's ideas of farmhouse needs vary with the climate; the fuel and water available; the type and size of the farm; and the racial differences on the farm.

Let's take a look at these replies. What do you think they were unanimous about as the first need of a convenient farmhome? Well, they considered most important some place for the men to wash other than the kitchen. But they differed as to where that place should be. Only a few thought it should be the laundry. In the Southwest -- southern California, Arizona, Texas -- the women suggested an outside porch for washing. In the rest of the South they wanted a separate building. In other sections they voted for a wash-room on the first floor.



Another feature that most women considered a necessity in a farm home was a convenient place to do their summer canning. Except in the Dakotas and in Arizona, New Mexico and west Texas, farm homemakers reported that they put up most of the canned food for their household. The majority of the replies favored a separate canning kitchen if the family could afford duplicate equipment. Otherwise, they wanted convenient arrangements for canning in the regular home kitchen. This brought up the question of how large the kitchen for a farm home should be. For meal preparation alone, women generally agreed that a small kitchen was most convenient. But they wanted a small kitchen only if the house provided elsewhere for occasional or seasonal jobs that require a good deal of room.

Women in all parts of the country agreed that the farm home needs a separate dining room. But opinions in various sections differed as to whether the kitchen should also provide space for a family meal-table. Women on the West Coast and the Mountain States generally voted yes. On the other hand, the northeast third of the country was 1 to 3 in favor of no meal table either in the kitchen or in an adjoining nook. In the South, about half the replies favored all meals out of the kitchen. But those voting for a table in the kitchen also specified a dining room for company and for some family meals each day.

Another feature that the women of the country were unanimously in favor of was a centrally located sewing room -- either a separate room or an alcove off the living or dining room. They reported that they made almost all of the family's clothing except outergarments and men's wear, and that this work stretched through the whole year. So they wanted all sewing equipment in one convenient place -- iron and ironing board, sewing machine, mending basket, cutting table and so on that most homes have in different parts of the house.

All sections were in favor of first-floor bedrooms for parents, and second-floor guest rooms. But over half the replies from the States of California, South Dakota, Montana, southwest Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Florida suggested a one-floor house as best for their needs.

The northern tier of States as far east as Ohio had one opinion about lodging its farm help; the rest of the country disagreed. Votes from the Northwest through the Dakotas, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, and Ohio, were for lodging the help in the main house. All other sections were against it. But the country generally agreed that hired men's rooms should have separate entrances and washing facilities.

You'll be interested to know how important farm housewives think recreation is for their families. Most of them voted for quite spacious indoor leisure areas as necessities in a comfortable home. Two-thirds said that the house-plan should allow enough wall space for a piano, a desk and a davenport, while over half specified a fireplace, too. Over 90 percent favored space for table games, and about half wanted both dancing and table games. The majority thought this game-and-dancing space should accomodate 20 people.

The majority of the voters also spoke for screened porches; heated bedrooms; shower baths; a place to grow house plants; closed kitchen cabinets; and outdoor arrangements for sleeping in hot weather, for reading and resting, for occasional dining, and for preparing vegetables. You may be interested to know, too, that the replies from all over the country showed that farm women favor a large rug for a living-room floor covering but linoleum for the dining room.





The home features that women differed very much about are the farm office in the house, and building attachments to the house such as a farm shop, a garage, a food storage room, and milk-and-egg rooms.

Well, that's all I have time to tell you today about farm housekeepers' ideas about house plans. But you see, this study is a step in the right direction at last -- a step toward houses planned to help the homemakers who live in them, and also to make the life of the family more successful there.

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